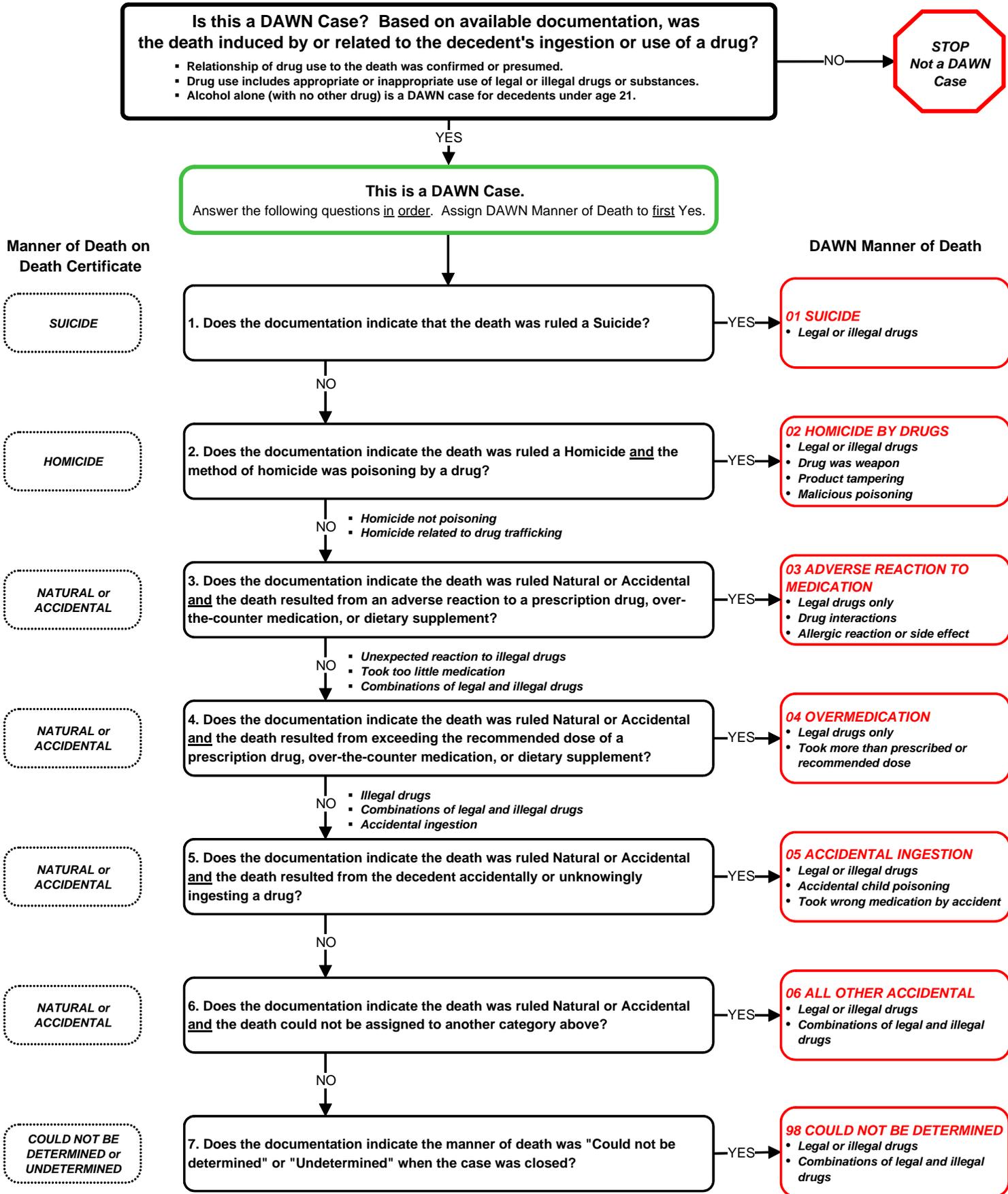


DAWN Decision Tree

MEDICAL EXAMINERS/CORONERS



Deaths **NOT** Reportable to DAWN

- 1) **The decedent was a recent drug user, but died of natural causes** – If the drug did not cause or contribute to the death, it is not a DAWN case.
 - The decedent was a cocaine user who died of cancer.
- 2) **The decedent was a homicide victim who was on drugs at the time of his or her death** – Homicides by any means other than drug(s) are not DAWN cases, even if the victim was using drugs that contributed to violent behavior.
 - The decedent was fatally stabbed while high on PCP.
- 3) **A non-pharmaceutical substance was consumed but not inhaled** – The non-pharmaceutical substance (e.g., gasoline, toluene, paint, glue) was consumed by some means other than inhalation. Non-pharmaceuticals are reportable only if inhaled (e.g., inhaling paint fumes while painting a closet).
 - The decedent drank turpentine. This is **NOT** a DAWN case.
 - The decedent injected gasoline while high on PCP. This is a DAWN case, but only the PCP is reportable.
- 4) **Only a history of drug abuse is documented** – If the documentation points only to a history of drug use/abuse and there is no evidence of recent use, it is **NOT** a DAWN case.
 - A death due to HIV indicates a history of intravenous drug abuse (IVDA). If there is no evidence of recent drug use, this is not a DAWN case.
- 5) **Alcohol is the only substance involved and the decedent is age 21 or over** – Cases involving alcohol and no other substance are reportable only if the decedent is not an adult (age less than 21). Alcohol is reportable in an adult DAWN case only when present in combination with another reportable substance.
- 6) **The only documentation of drug use is in toxicology test results** – Documentation of drug use must be present in the record, on the death certificate, or autopsy findings. Toxicology may pick up recent medications taken for legitimate therapeutic purposes, drugs administered during life-saving treatment, or drugs taken some time ago and unrelated to the death. Therefore, toxicology alone is not sufficient evidence to make a death a DAWN case. For example:
 - A man slipped on a wet concrete floor and fractured his hip. He subsequently died from a pulmonary embolus. The toxicology result is positive for opiates. There is no other evidence of opiate use. This is **NOT** a DAWN case.
- 7) **Drugs listed are not related to the death** – There is no documentation in the record, death certificate, or autopsy findings to indicate that the death was related to the use of drugs, either legal or illicit. Medications taken for therapeutic purposes that are not related to the death are NOT reportable to DAWN. For example:
 - A 24 year-old female passenger in a bus accident died as a result of her injuries. She is a daily cocaine user, but there is no indication her cocaine use was connected to the injury. This is **NOT** a DAWN case.
 - A young man presented with fever, headache, and symptoms of meningitis. He later dies. The record indicates that he used an albuterol inhaler and took oral steroids for asthma. These medications are not related to the person's death. This is not a DAWN case.
- 8) **There is no evidence of drug use** – The record, death certificate, or autopsy does not refer to any drug use. Examples may include:
 - Undermedication – Decedent who forgot to take, stopped taking, or took too little of a prescribed medication. For example, the decedent stopped taking medication to control high blood pressure, suffered a stroke, and died. The stroke is related to not taking the medication. This is **NOT** a DAWN case.